

FACT SHEET
COUNTING FATAL CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
RESULTS OF CALIFORNIA RECONCILIATION AUDIT, 1996

- I. Problem statement
- Child abuse and neglect (CAN) remains a serious societal problem.
 - Fatal child abuse and neglect is the most extreme consequence of CAN.
 - Fatal CAN represents the number one cause of infant injury deaths and the 2nd leading cause of death for the 1- 4 and 5-12 year old group behind drowning.
 - The true incidence of fatal CAN is not known (National estimates of 1,000 – 2,600 child deaths per year).
 - Ascertainment and surveillance issues - Problems with existing data sources
 - Information is needed in order to develop more effective policies and interventions.
- II. Creating Solutions
- State and local child death review teams (CDRTs)
 - California efforts
 - Local CDRTs
 - State Child Death Review Council
- III. Report of California Reconciliation Audit for 1996
- A. Purpose
- Describe the true incidence of fatal child abuse and neglect in California
 - Determine the proportion of fatal CAN missed in each of the existing data systems
 - Describe available demographic characteristics of fatal CAN cases
- B. Methodology
- Design: Reconciliation Audit of all 1996 child deaths (< 18 years of age) recorded as CAN in three statewide data sources conducted by local CDRTs based on local case identification, reviews and classification.
 - Data sources:
 - Department of Health Services Vital Statistics Death Records (VSDR)
 - Department of Justice Homicide File (DOJ HF)
 - Department of Justice Child Abuse Central Index (DOJ CACI)
 - Local CDRTs case reviews
 - Sample:
 - Identified 1996 fatal CAN cases recorded in three statewide databases

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Number</u>
VSDR	63
DOJ HOM	139
DOJ CACI	52
TOTAL	178 Unique Cases
	+ 6 CAN deaths identified by local CDRTs
	184 Unique CAN deaths identified by at least one source

B. Methodology (continued)

- Audit questions posed for the CDRTs to answer about each case:
 - Was the Team aware of this case?
 - Did the Team review this case?
 - Did the Team call the death a homicide?
 - Did the Team call the death a CAN homicide?
 - Did the Team identify and call any other deaths a CAN homicide?

IV. Results

A. Identification of fatal CAN cases

1. Fatal CAN cases identified from merging three statewide databases (N=178)

Data Source	Unique Cases	In Two Databases	In All Three Databases	TOTAL Cases
VSDR	12	36	14	62
DOJ HOM	79	44	14	137
DOJ CACI	29	8	14	51
Unique Totals	120 (67%)	44 (25%)	14 (8%)	178 (100%)

3. Fatal CAN cases identified and reviewed by local CDRTs

Local CDRT review of state database cases:	144 of 178 (81%)
Unique cases ID'ed by local CDRTs:	<u>6</u>
TOTAL – Reviewed:	150 of 184 (82%)

B. Determination of “true” incidence of fatal CAN:

Fatal CAN cases confirmed by CDRTs (State sources)	123/178 (69%)
Fatal CAN cases confirmed by CDRTs (State & CDRT sources)	129/184 (70%)

C. Sensitivity and Specificity using local CDRTs as the “gold standard” for Fatal CAN

Test Accuracy For Each Source	Sensitivity ¹	Specificity ^{2a} (N=150)	Specificity ^{2b} (N=184)
VSDR	49/129 38%	16/21 76%	42/55 76%
DOJ HOM	112/129 87%	10/21 48%	30/55 55%
CACI	28/129 22%	12/21 57%	32/55 58%

1 Sensitivity refers to the proportion of fatal CAN cases correctly classified in each data source compared to the standard, i.e., cases confirmed by the local CDRTs.

2 Specificity refers to the proportion of cases that were not fatal CAN that were correctly classified in each data source compared to the standard, i.e., cases not confirmed as fatal CAN by the local CDRTs.

^a Specificity calculated on cases reviewed by CDRTs.

^b Specificity calculated on cases identified by any source.

D. Estimated number of CAN Fatalities based upon the 1996 Audit

Cases confirmed by local CDRTs Audit	129
Estimate of cases among non-reviewed cases (n=34)	<u>23</u>
CALCULATED TOTAL FATAL CAN – 1996	152